

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 1A-19THE WASHINGTON POST
12 June 1980**JACK ANDERSON**

Former Agent Scores CIA's Methods

Defenders of the Central Intelligence Agency usually responded to disclosures of the agency's illegal activities and operational failures by stressing the importance to policymakers of accurate information about what's happening in the world.

But now a CIA critic — a respected employee who served 25 years in the agency — has challenged that justification for the CIA's existence. In a nutshell, he says, the CIA does a rotten job of intelligence gathering.

The former agent, Ralph McGehee, has set down his disturbing critique in a book-length manuscript, and expanded on his views in an interview with my associate Dale Van Atta.

The CIA's primary function, McGehee concluded, is to provide "information that supports the preconceived notions of an administration's top policy-makers — in other words, to tell a president and his advisers what they want to hear. This, of course, is worse than no intelligence at all, since it reinforces wrong-headed assumptions while suppressing accurate information that conflicts with prevailing policy views.

The results can be disastrous — as in the cases of Vietnam and Iran, where the CIA systematically exaggerated the strength and popularity of the South Vietnamese government and the deposed shah while minimizing that of their opponents.

Citing a personal example, McGehee told of his success with a low-cost, non-violent anticommunist program he directed in Thailand in 1967. His well-trained, 25-man Thai task force was able, by peaceful persuasion, to turn the procommunist natives of one province completely around.

The program was discontinued by top CIA officials, McGehee says, because it

belied their view that the Thais were basically pro-American natives being terrorized by about 4,000 communist guerrillas. Yet McGehee had found widespread support among the population — and had thwarted the communists without resort to heavy-handed counterinsurgency measures in vogue at headquarters.

By contrast, McGehee told of a colleague in Thailand who claimed to have subverted a Communist Party official, and sent back glowing reports of disruptive activities within the party. The agent was given a medal and promotion. But his successor in the post found that the operation had been largely imaginary; the Thai defector had been lying. Nevertheless, the agent eventually became chief of personnel for the East Asia division, McGehee said.

"Ours was not an operation to produce intelligence," McGehee said. "Instead we produced only that information necessary to support CIA goals, operations and illusions." The CIA, he said, "is potential ruin lurking in a state of suspended animation."